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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 THE HAGUE 000164

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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU: EXPECTATIONS FOR JAN 31 FOREIGN
MINISTERS' MEETING (GAERC)

REF: A. STATE 9678

[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 2831

[1](#)C. THE HAGUE 3083

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Schofer for reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The U.S. and EU need to agree to disagree on China and prepare a soft landing for the transatlantic relationship after the inevitable lift of the China arms embargo, Jaap Werner (MFA, Political Director) and Bahia Tahzib (MFA Deputy European Correspondent) told Poloff during discussion of reftel points January 20. Werner and Tahzib urged us to accentuate the positive aspects of the U.S.-EU relationship and welcomed the President's February visit to Brussels. The UN should continue coordinating Tsunami relief for now, they said, noting some in the EU press for a free-standing, prominent EU role. There is fresh hope in the Middle East and the EU has some fence-mending to do with Israel, Werner admitted. On designation of Hizballah, the Dutch maintain a strong preference for collective rather than unilateral action and believe that USG efforts should focus on undecided members, such as France and even the UK. On Iraq, Werner said that message coordination on the outcome of the elections is critical but will be difficult, not least because the EU must try to arrive at a common position first, including bringing France along. On Croatia, the GoNL is skeptical that there will be cooperation on Gotovina; Luxemburg has not set the rest of the Balkans agenda for the GAERC. Iran is not on the agenda for the GAERC; the GoNL thinks the February 28 IAEA deadline is too soon to honestly assess Iran's intentions. Finally, on Cuba, Werner expects the June measures to be modified, with an emphasis on broadening outreach to the dissident community. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) China:

Werner warned that the USG and the EU "need to start putting things into play to soften the landing" of the "inevitable lifting of the arms embargo in a few months." He and Tahzib took exception to reftel's characterization of a lift as "blow to transatlantic relations." They pointed to notable areas of recent cooperation, such as with the tsunami response and in the Ukraine and argued that "the U.S. knows all the details of the lift by now and has had time to prepare." He acknowledged Poloff's point that the February visit of the President was intended to help renew the transatlantic relationship (more below), and that a premature lift could poison the visit. Werner said he had appreciated but "had not been overwhelmed by" the numerous presentations given to explain the USG objections and he still believes the tool box/code of conduct "covers the issue." He urged the U.S. to realize "it's not the end of the world; the EU has these alternate arrangements in place." Poloff countered that the USG message has been consistent, and negative, about lifting the embargo, most recently in The Hague during Secretary Powell's December visit. Werner said that we might

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have to resolve the case as "agreeing to disagree." Poloff urged Werner to work to delay any lift as long as possible and reminded him that the issue remained very sensitive not only for the executive branch in Washington but also for Congress, which has its own dynamic and strong interests in this matter which must not be underestimated.

[1](#)3. (C) Transatlantic Relations:

Pointing to "positive vibes from Secretary-designate Rice," Werner said his high expectations - and active planning - for the President's February visit were matched across the EU. The EU will try not to lecture the President, and he hoped the President would likewise refrain from lecturing them. He hoped EU President Luxemburg would "orchestrate, not pre-cook" it while acknowledging that the welcome "needs to be carefully managed by both sides." As for broader and longer term dialogue and action, Werner clearly welcomed Poloff's reminder that the USG highly values Dutch input and ideas on the widest range of topic and warmly promised to keep lines of communication and cooperation open and active at all levels.

[1](#)4. (C) Tsunami Disaster:

The Dutch are satisfied with how OCHA (UN Humanitarian Affairs) and the UN had coordinated tsunami response in the near term, Werner said, and he expected the UN to continue in this role into the midterm. He noted that the political aspects (and hence, the work for diplomats rather than aid workers) of the crisis are only beginning to emerge. Longer term, he said the Dutch await the results of the ongoing World Bank needs assessment. He strongly praised the "rapid and generous USG response," noting how "impressed he had been that we had had aircraft carriers on the spot within days flying helicopter missions for all the world to see"; this will be "good for the USG image in Europe and the region," he added with a smile. He said the EU is now discussing whether the UN should continue to have primacy in coordinating all response or whether there is a defined role that the EU can assume for itself, as some EU member states strongly desire, he revealed. Luxemburg is organizing a review of the EU's crisis response capacity, Werner concluded.

15. (C) Middle East:

While the EU will continue to "warn Israel when it crosses red lines, like with the wall/fence or settlements," Werner said, he emphasized that the Netherlands welcomes the recent positive actions taken by both sides. He agreed with Poloff that the EU "has a credibility problem in the region" and believed "this is not the best time to criticize Israel." The GoNL believes that "clarity soon on final status issues would improve the effectiveness of what we all do now," he said. "Supporting Abu Mazen is today's challenge," he concluded, adding, "We want to see Israel invest in him, too and not make of him merely Arafat II."

16. (C) Hizballah as a terrorist organization:

In a separate conversation with Econoff, Wouter Jurgens (MFA political directorate, senior policy officer responsible for terrorist finance issues) noted that the issue was not likely to be raised at this GAERC. He said the GoNL position had not changed since they argued for EU designation of the entire entity during the November 10 EU Clearinghouse discussions (refs b and c). The Dutch still maintain a strong preference for collective rather than unilateral action on this issue and believed that USG efforts should focus on still undecided members, such as France and even the UK.

17. (C) Iraq:

"Iraq should give us a lesson in damage control," Werner said. He agreed the EU and USG should coordinate post-election messages but he was not sure how to open a channel for that purpose. The EU would first need to get a common position, he said, noting that "especially France could be a challenge if they take a critical view." "There is a spectrum for choices of words," Werner noted, each with its own resonance and connotations, such as the elections "were a success," or "a qualified success," or, "mostly successful but for pockets of problems," and so on. The GoNL would welcome an "active keeping in touch in capitals and constant checking" to ensure a clear message to the press." He noted that the GAERC follows the scheduled elections by one day, and that the elections might still be on-going at the time; therefore, GAERC statements might be difficult to draft and coordinate with us.

18. (C) Balkans:

Werner complained that Luxemburg had not yet set the agenda for the Balkans discussion. It could include Bosnia, possibly Kosovo; Croatia is "guesswork at this point." Poloff pressed Werner on Gotovina, stressing that the EU should not give Croatia a pass on accession negotiations, and on being true to the EU's avowed hope for "effective multilateralism" in this case. Werner said the GoNL remains "skeptical about Croatia's cooperation."

19. (C) Iran:

Iran is not on the GAERC agenda, Werner said. The EU, running negotiations with Iran on a number of tracks, seems to believe the USG is "coming around" to a new look at Iran since it appears to have "condoned the EU3 initiative to date." When Poloff raised the February 28 deadline at the IAEA's BOG, Werner countered, "Let's take a few weeks of months for this; February is too soon to assess Iran in the terms of a constructive engagement." He noted that the EU was also telling Iran to show its bona fides, as laid out in reftel, by not interfering in Iraq's election and ending support for Hizballah and Palestinian rejectionists. He offered to "stay in touch to discuss strategy and outcomes."

110. (C) Cuba:

The GAERC will take the Cuba decision as an A point, Werner said, meaning the EU has decided to change its "June

measures" as earlier reported. At the same time, the EU is "trying to make a swing to a more pro-dissident policy." Werner would not admit, though pressed, that the relaxation of the June measures would include an insistence on the release of the 61 prisoners within the six-month trial period, neither could he promise that the EU was planning to keep human rights "paramount." Rather, he said the EU was likely to take a more comprehensive view, which includes human rights. (Note: the MFA's human rights office has limited input into the GoNL's overall Cuba policy, he said; action lies with the Western Hemisphere and Political Director's office.) Poloff reiterated the USG's request to be included in the EU's human rights briefings in Havana.

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